

## **OSCAR Meeting Report**

**25<sup>th</sup> January, 2024**

**Keith Sweatman**

The small meeting room at the Northshore Community Centre was full to overflowing and the meeting went on until about 9.30pm. One reason for that was the interest in hearing what Scott Whittaker, the Regional Director TMR North Coast Region had to say.

It emerged that another reason was that there are increasing levels of concern within Sunshine Coast communities about the way development is proceeding under the current regime. They had heard about OSCAR and were hopeful that it might be able to help them have some influence of the direction development in their area was heading. There was, for example, a representative from a new community group that is forming in Eumundi who said she was concerned about what was happening in their area.

The other reason was the forthcoming council election.

### **TMR Report**

Scott's presentation focussed on the SE corner of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council area and the following projects that will consume all the funding likely to be available through to the 2032 Olympic Games.

- The Heavy Rail connection from Beerwah to Maroochydore
- The Mass Transit between Caloundra and Maroochydore,
- Connectivity issues that they eventually hope to address with the much-vaunted Mooloolah Interchange.
- Connectivity issues created by the rapidly growing Aura development
- An upgrade to 4 lanes of the Sunshine Coast Motorway and some of the roads connecting into it.

Scott said that they were too deeply into the Mooloolah Interchange to be deterred by the decision by the federal government to withdraw funding. They were confident that one way or another they would get the needed funding although it might have to be built in stages, focussing first on connections, e.g. between Mountain Creek and Birtinya, to reduce the traffic that had to come onto the Motorway.

Although TMR is not directly responsible for the Heavy Rail and the Mass Transit system, those developments have a large impact on road routing and design. The "rule of thumb" has in the past been that people would walk up to a mile to get to a railway station. However, with the widespread adoption of electric bikes and scooters, that distance has increased. The interior of carriages will be designed to accommodate those Active Transport vehicles.

On the Mass Transit from Caloundra to Maroochydore, they have all but given up on the rail-based system of the old Coast and now looking at a trackless system that is now under evaluation in Perth. These vehicles are guided by magnets set in the roadway that separately control each carriage so that it moves as if it were on tracks. They are full electric, running on rechargeable batteries and can be driverless. Since it does not require the construction of a rail network it is much cheaper than the previously proposed light rail system.

There were a lot of questions about reducing the number of vehicles on the road by making public transport more useable. Scott said public transport is handled by Translink but he said that TMR does try to work collaboratively with Translink to find the best solutions. Public transport servicing the airport was a particular issue that was highlighted as a serious failing.

Scott's answers to questions about when the various parts of the plan would be completed left the conclusion that it was increasingly unlikely that all the transport systems required to get the expected hundreds of thousands of people to and from the Olympic venues on the Sunshine Coast would be in place in time. It was acknowledged that could well mean that for the 2032 Olympic consideration might have to be given to the system that is going to be used for this year's Olympics in Paris: All the major roads connecting Olympic venues will be closed to private traffic

and a fleet of thousands of buses running on those dedicated roads will be used to get competitors and spectators around.

In the context of the residential and industrial development proposed in the Yandina area and also the major expansion of industry on the Coolool end of the Yandina-Coolool road, I asked Scott whether there were any plans to upgrade the Yandina-Coolool road. Scott said he was only vaguely aware of those developments and that there are no plans for upgrading the Yandina-Coolool Road or any of the east/west connecting roads except the southern part of the Sunshine Coast Motorway.

On the Coolool roundabout Scott said that is recognized as a major point of congestion, at least partly because of the drop-off and pick-up traffic generated by the nearby primary school. They are planning a major reconfiguration of the service roads in the area to reduce this problem.

### **Community Issues**

The community association that has for several years been fighting the Stockland Development known as “Twin Waters West”, which is on the western side of the Sunshine Coast Motorway, more or less opposite the existing Twin Waters development, had been confident that they had won their case. They had hired experts on all the issues relevant to the proposed development, including flooding, and it seems that the Council had accepted their case against the development. However, when the case ended up in the P&E court the judge accepted that the appellant had come up with a way of dealing with all the issues, leaving the Council with no option but to withdraw their rejection of the proposal. While the principle of the “Model Litigant” was not mentioned it can probably be inferred that was the reason the Council gave in. The proposal that Stockland came up with to save the development was the use of vinyl piles to deal with all the issues relating to tidal flow and flooding.



### **The Council Election**

The council elections will be on 16<sup>th</sup> March and, as for previous elections, OSCAR’s election program is up and running ([Council Elections 2024 - OSCAR Inc](#) ). This website will be continually updated as new information comes to hand. Several members of the OSCAR executive are going to have to withdraw because they are standing for election or are actively supporting a candidate.

OSCAR and member groups are organising forums and questionnaires designed to give candidates an opportunity to make clear their position on key issues. YADCA has an opportunity to submit questions. Currently planned forums are listed on the OSCAR election web page. Melva said that it is particularly important that as many as possible member organisations attend the SCRC Mayoral Candidate Forum at the Maroochydore RSL on February 21, 7:00-9:00pm. While not able to charge an entry free, OSCAR will be asking for donations to help cover the substantial cost of that venue (which was the cheapest that could be found on the Sunshine Coast). On the basis of past experience when such meetings turned into a slinging match, people who want to ask questions will have to submit them in writing for presentation by the forum chairman.

Max Standage told me that MADCA has organised a forum for Division 10 candidates at the Mapleton Bowls Club 7.00pm on 4<sup>th</sup> March. All three candidates have said they will turn up and YADCA members are welcome to attend (no charge).